

Understanding the New Education Policy 2020 in the light of Swami Vivekananda's Concept of Education : An Analysis

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Abstract : The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has outlined significant reforms in the Indian Education System. It has mainly emphasized on early childhood education, a mother-tongue-based medium of instruction up to primary education, mandatory vocation training, and a move towards holistic assessment together with developing scientific temperament and a critical thinking to global competitiveness. The principal features of NEP-2020 documents are so close to the ideas of Swami Vivekananda's expressed on education that document seems to a great extent, on exposition of the ideas of Swami Vivekananda on education which were reflected upon during the Renaissance period of Indian history more than two thousand year back . This released paper humbly attempt to explore how the ideas of Swami Vivekananda are still relevant for the need of preparing human resources for India even in 21st century.

Keywords: NEP 2020, ECCE, Multilingualism, Mother tongue, Skill development, holistic progress card, Equity and Access, SEDGs, positive discrimination.

Introduction - The new education policy 2020(NEP) was announced by the Government of India on 29th July 2020. Subsequent to the National Education Policy announced in 1986, NEP policy of India 2020 is the first major change in the educational policy of India.

Principal features of NEP-2020- NEP -2020 provides fundamental structure and functional changes in India's educational system with a view to prepare the youth of India competent both the nation's need and global competitiveness along with the growth of their personality imbued in the value of Indian culture and tradition. Its key aspects, in brief, are summarized as following.

(A) New Curriculum Structure- The policy introduces an education structure designated as '5+3+3+4' stage structure for education covering till the completion of secondary education. This structure includes —

- (1) Fundamental stage (5 years)- This stage runs from age 03 to 08. This stage covers 'Anganwadi' and grades (classes) 1 and 2 education.
- (2) Preparatory Stage (3 year)- this stage runs from age 8 to age of 11 and covers grades(classes) 03 to 05.
- (3) Middle stage-(3 years)- This stage runs from Ages 11-14 and covers grades(classes) 6 to 8.
- (4) Secondary stage (4 years)- This stage runs from Ages 14-18 and covers grades(classes) 9 to 12.

(B) Early Childhood Education- This significant feature of the structural changes is reflected in incorporating early

child care education (ECCE), IE. 'Anganwadi' is to formal school system for early learning and mental development. This early childhood education initiated at the age of 03 reminds Platonic system of education which prescribed educational initiation to the child from the birth.

(C) Multilingualism and medium of mother tongue instruction- The NEP-2020 emphasized education in the mother tongue or regional languages up to class five with no language imposition on students. This aspect of NEP has carefully addressed to both the biological and psychological need of the child."Language is the chief means and index of a nation's progress"¹, Swami Vivekananda upheld; and he advocated that the fittest language for education is that "in which we naturally express ourselves, in which we communicate our anger, grief, or love etc.—there cannot be finer language than that."² Swami Vivekananda argued that no artificial language can ever have that force, and that gravity and expressiveness, or admit of being given any truth you please, as that spoken language."³ Swami Vivekananda emphatically stressed on the need of mother – languages as the medium of education. He pleaded —"Language must be made like pure steel – turn and twist it , any way you like, it is again the same –it clones rock in the twin at one stroke, without its edge being turned."⁴

(D) Focus on skill development- The NEP-2020 aims to get skilled youth for the nation. Therefore, apart from

traditional education, it introduced vocational education and internship mandatory from class six onwards with the purpose to develop skills among the growing youth. Swami Vivekananda conceived of such a system of education for the masses which could help them "to regain their faith in their own self which was essential to wake up the inherent Brahman in them."⁵ In his mission of education "the destitute the poor, the illiterate peasantry and laboring classes" prevailed over the gentry.⁶ Upholding that "a nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence (skill) spread among the masses"⁷ he prescribed a practical education as to inculcate skill among "the poor boys" who "would rather go to plough to earn their living than come to your school".⁸ Skill development got so much importance in Swami Vivekananda's education system that to him the ploughman and factory workers needed the first moral of education— "If the poor cannot come to education, education must reach them at the plough, in the factory, everywhere."⁹ The entire endeavor behind the introduction of NEP-2020 is to evolve out an education system which can enable the Indian youth to stand on their own feet. The same motive was active in Swami Vivekananda's mind when he was stating for a "Man making education".¹⁰ He was clear in his vision of education for Indian Youth when he conceived of an education which can "help the common mass of people equip themselves for the struggle of life" and enable them "to stand on one's own legs".¹¹ Swami Vivekananda must be remembered as the forerunner of the mission of the 'Skilled- India'.

(E) Reform in assessment system- The NEP-2020 has found the assessment system of the students going on so far inadequate and recommends "holistic progress could" which includes progress in extracurricular and vocational activities. This holistic assessment system of NEP- 2020 can better be understood in the light of the idea of Swami Vivekananda on education when he has conceived education as the manifestation of 'free-will' trained enough to be ensued rightly and efficiently. He viewed that assessment of the student must be done on the basis of the idea of an education system which reflects the assimilation of all the idea which are 'life – building', 'man-making', and 'character –making'.¹² According to Swami Vivekananda the right system of education – the system through which Free- Will can manifest it rightly and efficiently must comprise four dimensions in its body.¹³

- (I) Character Forming
- (II) Strengthen the mind
- (III) Expanding of intellect
- (IV) Bringing self – reliance

As such a continuous assessment process must be active to evaluate the progress and growth of the student on the basis of these four dimensions of education.

(F) Equity and Access- The NEP-2020 specially focuses on providing quality education to "Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Group (SEDGs)." This idea can also trace

itself back in the idea of education expounded by Swami Vivekananda. Essentially, the feature of ' equity and access' incorporated in NEP-2020 is a step forward to ensure the democratization and social justice in the field of education to the disadvantaged and marginalized social sections in India. To Swami Vivekananda, education is national concern, it is not mere an individual affair. A nation can never rise up unless availability of education is ensured to masses. He deplored that downfall of India as a nation was caused mainly due to the monopolization of entire education and intelligence of the land by handful of men, especially royal authority¹⁴; and it is the expansion of the education to the masses which would expand the life- force of the nation. India failed to complete with the western nations only due to depriving the masses from education by narrowing its field.¹⁵ Further Swami Vivekananda comes as the first personality in whose plan of education destitute, poor illiterate peasantry and laboring classes were given priority over the class of gentry. He clearly supported 'positive discrimination' in favor of socially and economically disadvantaged people. He full throatily spoke- " if there is in equality in nature, still there must be equal chance for all of its greater for some and for some less-the weaker should be given more chances than strong".¹⁶ In order to ensure access and equality to the deprived masses uncompromised Swami Vivekananda went to this extent to state that " if the son of a Brahmin needs one teacher, that of Chandal needs ten" and greater help must be given to him when nature has not endowed with an acute intellect from birth".¹⁷

Conclusion- The discussion, made above clearly brings out that the features of NEP-2020 enormously coincide with the idea of Swami Vivekananda propounded on education. It seems that during the course of the preparation of the documents of "NEP-2020", concerned stakeholders were charged with the spirit of the idea of education propounded by Swami Vivekananda. In this way the document of NEP-2020 can be treated as an authentic tribute to the great thinker on conceptional plan. However, the same spirit is vehemently awaited in its execution and implementation.

References:-

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